



FACTSHEET

What Is Exploring?

Program

Exploring is part of the Learning for Life career education program for young men and women who are 14 (and have completed the eighth grade) through 20 years old.

Exploring's purpose is to provide experiences to help young people mature and to prepare them to become responsible and caring adults. Explorers are ready to investigate the meaning of interdependence in their personal relationships and communities.

Exploring is based on a unique and dynamic relationship between youth and the organizations in their communities. Local community organizations initiate an Explorer post by matching their people and program resources to the interests of young people in the community. The result is a program of activities that helps youth pursue their special interests, grow, and develop.

Explorer posts can specialize in a variety of career skills. Exploring programs are based on five areas of emphasis: career opportunities, life skills, service learning, character education, and leadership experience.

Career Opportunities

- Develop potential contacts that may broaden employment options
- Boost self-confidence and experience success at school and work

Life Skills

- Build physical and mental fitness
- Experience positive social interaction

Service Learning

- Encourage the skill and desire to help others
- Gain a keen respect for the basic rights of others

Character Education

- Help make ethical choices
- Fulfill one's responsibility to society as a whole

Leadership Experience

- Acquire leadership skills to fulfill one's responsibilities in society
- Develop a variety of leadership traits

Goals

Young adults involved in Exploring will

- Gain practical knowledge of and experience in a career
- Engage in a program of activities centered on career opportunities, life skills, service learning, character education, and leadership experience to encourage the development of the whole person
- Experience positive leadership from adult and youth leaders and be given opportunities to take on leadership roles
- Have a chance to learn and grow in a supportive, caring, and enjoyable environment

Methods

The methods of Exploring have been carefully chosen to meet the needs of young adults.

- *Voluntary association between youth and adults.* Because Exploring is voluntary, youth are receptive to new ideas, experiences, and relationships. For the Explorer, these relationships provide a connection to new ways of thinking and acting as well as a new identity as a responsible young adult.
- *Ethical decision making.* Exploring asks young people to be responsible for themselves, for a program of activities and experiences, and for other people, thereby providing numerous opportunities for youth to make effective and ethical decisions. These opportunities are enhanced by the influence of capable adults and structured activities.
- *Group activities.* Exploring activities are interdependent group experiences: Success depends on the cooperation of all.
- *Recognition of achievement.* Recognition might come through formal awards, but it also is achieved through the acknowledgment by peers and adults of a young person's competence and abilities.
- *Democratic process.* Explorer posts provide exposure to democratic ideals and skills that are needed throughout life.
- *Curiosity, exploration, and adventure.* Curiosity is encouraged and a sense of exploration and adventure is developed through new experiences that provide opportunities for youth to acquire new skills and participate in action-oriented activities.

Post Specialties

Every Explorer post specializes in a specific career program area. More than 100 different specialties have been organized, ranging from accounting to zoology. Some specialty programs, such as the following, have grown to include a national committee, activities, and staff support:

Medical and Health Careers. The American Medical Association and other national health organizations support the establishment of posts in hospitals, clinics, medical centers, schools, and other health-care organizations. These posts render valuable community service and give members an insight into a variety of career opportunities.

Law Enforcement. This specialty is endorsed by the International Association of Chiefs of Police and is helped by other national law enforcement organizations and industries. Posts can provide assistance in crime prevention and traffic control.

Aviation. The aviation specialty encompasses a range of programs, including maintenance, operations, construction, flight attendants, airport management, and aerospace. The Federal Aviation Association supports this growth, along with aviation organizations, unions, and industries.

Law and Government. The American Bar Association and other organizations support the high interest of many youth in law or government participation through Exploring. Law Day activities, mock trials, and other law-related activities provide firsthand experience in America's legal and court system.

Others. In addition to the above, other popular Explorer post specialties include conservation, computers, engineering, firefighting, music, business, science, automotive, rescue, radio-TV, communications, electronics, secretarial, architecture, banking, photography, accounting, and journalism.

Ethics in Action

An important goal of Exploring is to help young adults be responsible and caring people, both now and in the future. Exploring uses "ethical controversies" to help young adults develop the ability to make responsible choices that reflect their concern for what is at risk and for the people involved. Because an ethical controversy is a problem-solving situation, leaders expect young adults to employ empathy, invention, and selection when they think through their position and work toward a solution.

Post Activities	What an Explorer post does is limited only by the imagination and involvement of its leaders—build a glider, make an electric car, produce a play, conduct a mock trial, or teach disabled people to swim. Posts across the country today are experiencing all these adventures and many more. All that is needed are concerned adults who are willing to share a little bit of themselves with today's youth—tomorrow's citizens.
Getting Your Post Up and Running	<p>Organizing posts is easy for an organization to do if it follows these steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct an annual survey in community high schools to determine students' career and hobby interests. 2. Call a meeting of key people within an organization, with an Exploring representative in attendance. This representative explains special-interest Exploring, describes key volunteer positions, and plans the recruiting of adult leaders. 3. Have a meeting between the post committee and Advisors and the Exploring representative. Explain the responsibilities of adult leaders. The Exploring representative also discusses program ideas and helps develop a one-year program, which is reviewed and adopted. 4. Have the organization's top executive write a personal letter to each young adult selected from the survey, inviting the youths and their parents to attend an organizational meeting. Follow up this letter with a personal invitation from a member of the organization to each prospective Explorer. 5. Hold the first meeting, involving young adults, the post committee, and selected consultants. Make plans for the installation of elected youth officers.
What Youth Want	<p>Exploring research has revealed these major points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High school students are interested in careers/vocations. • Teenagers want a broader experience that supplements career information with practical, "hands-on" experience and is tailored to their cultural backgrounds. • Teenagers want to belong to a group that provides a safe place from which they can address the issues that affect them as they grow and develop. These issues include becoming more independent, developing social relationships, undergoing psychological changes, reaching sexual maturity, and reevaluating values.
Program Support	<p>Learning for Life has designed extensive literature, audiovisuals, training, activities, and awards to support Explorer posts.</p> <p><i>Literature and audiovisuals.</i> A variety of books, pamphlets, and videos are available on organization, program, leadership, and activities. In particular, the <i>Explorer Leader Handbook</i> supports leadership and planning.</p> <p><i>Training.</i> Basic and advanced leader training sessions are available, along with post leader workshops, quarterly Advisor meetings, and program conferences for improving and enriching post programs.</p> <p><i>Activities.</i> Programs that enhance Explorer participation are the biennial National Explorer Leadership Conference, biennial National Law Enforcement Explorer Conference, and National Law Explorer Mock Trial Competition.</p> <p><i>Awards.</i> A variety of awards and scholarships are available for recognizing Explorer achievements.</p> <p><i>Liability insurance.</i> Learning for Life has liability insurance that covers leaders and participating organizations. Accident and medical coverage are not included but are available.</p>